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ABSTRACT

In brief response to a paper presented at a conference, the distinction between training and education is emphasized in terms of mission and institutions best equipped to provide each service. Discussion subsequently focuses on the need for the development of detailed descriptions of the various positions in child care, along with statements of the required knowledge and skills of each position. The advantages of competency-based education and training are pointed out. Other topics briefly addressed in conclusion include the provision in training programs of supervised exposure to working with children, the role of secondary school programs in developing aide-level personnel, and the creation of career development programs that are external to universities. (Author/RH)

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DEVELOPING TRAINING STRUCTURES FOR CHILD CARE PERSONNEL:

COMMENTS ON ALMY'S PAPER

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DEVELOPING TRAINING STRUCTURES FOR CHILD CARE PERSONNEL:

COMMENTS ON ALMY'S PAPER

Approaching the task of commenting on the paper by Almy created some degree of uncertainty for me. After reading the first several pages my immediate reaction was that my career development was almost completely at odds with the assigned task. Almy was addressing the preparation of day care personnel to work presumably with normal children. And she was doing this from the perspective of a university faculty person. My background, on the other hand, has been as both a practitioner and staff development director in residential settings for developmentally disabled children and adults. After recovering from my initial dismay, I managed to read on. Quickly a new perspective emerged. The issues she was writing about were the same ones I encounter, almost on a daily basis, rather than something alien to me. The problems of training child care staff seem to have an amazing degree of commonality across rather diverse settings and populations. For certain, the differences pale in comparison to the similarities: low pay, lack of professional prestige, inadequate release time for training, and so forth are the same "albatrosses" in residential settings as she points out they are in day care.

As such, it appears that she has covered the issues involved in child care training and education quite admirably and comprehensively. The one difference I did note, however, derives from my perspective on the issues as a professional in the human resource development field. This issue is the relative lack of attention paid to the differences between "training" and "education", which has significant implications for the resolution of some of the issues raised. It is a distinction that is

rarely made in university settings.

The primary difference between "training" and "education" is one of mission (Nadler, 1979). Training is job- or task-oriented. It attempts to take the current range of behaviors a person exhibits with respect to a situation and narrows them to one or two "correct" ways of doing the task. Education, on the other hand, is individual-oriented. Instead of restricting the range of individual behavior in dealing with a situation it generally attempts to broaden them to a fairly large number of "acceptable" ways of doing a task. Another purpose of education, sometimes referred to as "development", is to allow individuals to monitor changes in their field and therefore prepare for the future.

Put into this light, some of the issues raised such as "Who should train child care workers?" or "Is it preferable to use pre-service or in-service training structures?" can be more easily resolved. For example, training of child care workers is clearly the responsibility of the agency employing them. It deals with job-specific methods, information, and skills which differ from agency to agency. Educational institutions such as colleges and universities cannot possibly fulfill this mission, although they can be of considerable assistance to agencies through contracted training courses, as well as adequately educating child care administrators and internal trainers to train their own staff.

On the other hand, child care agencies are ill-suited to readily fulfill the education and development missions in preparing child care workers. Overall competency development as well as attention to the "cutting edge" of the field are the business of the college and university system. They are the best available source to fulfill these missions. Individual agencies,

and even consortiums, do not have the resources or the degree of expertise needed, nor can they afford them.

Another ptoblem created by inattention to the training vs. education distinction is seen when Almy noted reactions that needs assessments " are phony, since the universities give what they want to". Many agencies which arrange for "in-service training" by university sources are expecting just that--training. However, the university is not in the business of training. The actual problem here, if closely examined, is not that the universities change the content areas to be covered, but rather they attempt to educate rather than build specific job skills. Not only does this approach often fail to develop job skills, it frequently creates a group of "overeducated" and dissatisfied employees.

Ratner than continuing to discuss the impact of the above distinction on the various issues in child care training structure, I'd like to ask the Child Care Training Structures Task Force to carefully examine the implications of training versus education when they explore the issues that arise at the Conference. Many of the "fuzzy edges" of the agency-university interface, which sometimes break down into open hostility, may be firmed up by considering this distinction.

At this point I'd like to turn to reinforcing, and sometimes expanding upon, some of the specific issues raised by Almy. One of these is that both training and certification which reflect the "real, day-to-day" world of child care are needed. The development of detailed descriptions of the various positions in child care, along with the required (not nice-to-know), knowledges and skills of each position, would greatly assist in both training/education and certification on a competency-based model. Among the

problems this might help with is the relative lack of prestige of the child care worker. Typically professions that have well-defined positions and responsibilities, such as medicine, law, etc., carry more prestige than rather amorphous fields. This would make the issue raised by Almy of whether existing child care workers should be "grandfathered" or required to take certain refresher courses somewhat moot. More likely the issue to be raised would be what type of structure can child care use to assess individual's existing skills and how methods can be structured to assist experienced workers in acquiring weak, improper, or absent competencies.

A distinct advantage of the competency-based model of certification is that it encourages competency-based education and training. Once this step is taken, modularized, individualized instructional models become a viable method of developing child care personnel. Two issues raised by Almy would greatly benefit from this approach. First is the issue of inadequate release time being available for staff training. No longer would the daily schedule of the child care agency have to schedule specific times for group training. Nap time and other similar times when one staff person can be free can be used for training. Similarly, while many staff cannot arrive early or stay late for group instruction, they may be willing to periodically work on individual study packages at their convenience during their non-working hours.

A second problem which might be somewhat resolved by this instructional approach is that of training rural child care staff. Agencies in rural settings are inevitably small and cannot afford either full-time internal trainers or regular contracts with universities for training. Even a con-

sortium approach is often not viable due to the physical distances between various agencies. The development and availability of individualized instruction packages could, however, be a straightforward solution since they could be administered by a part-time staff development person or the administrator of the agency.

Once competency-based certification is available, it may also become possible to develop a national, standardized needs assessment device that could be used to target needs for instructional module development and delivery. Needs assessment, along with training program evaluation, appear to be the most difficult areas for professional trainers to cope with. They must surely be even more frustrating to child care administrators who do not have an in-house or contracted trainer. One attempt at a similar system has been the development of a State-Wide Needs Assessment Program (Smith, Ross & Smith, 1980) in the area of continuing education. This system not only provides information on needed topics but also the level (basic, intermediate, advanced). With a computerized system like this it would be possible for individual agencies to send completed needs assessment instruments to a national processing center for analysis and return. In addition, if large numbers of agencies were using the instrument, compilations could be made of national, state, and other demographic groups. These could be used to guide the development and modification of both in-service and pre-service training and education programs.

Regardless of what model is used in preparing child care workers, either before or after their employment by an agency, the training program should place stress on providing the individual with significant supervised exposure to working with children. It would also be preferrable

if this experience occurred in actual, functioning child care programs rather than laboratory or demonstration settings. While lab schools are a desirable mechanism for developing model programs, they also do not expose the worker-in-training to the realities of child care settings in general. Some form of rotational assignment through several agencies might be a good model since the individual would be exposed to workers with differing sets of competencies.

There are several other issues raised by Almy which require some comment. The first of these is the role of secondary school programs in developing workers. While she indicated a need to examine these programs, in spite of the Task Force focus on post-secondary education, I'd like to stress the necessity of including them in the overall training structure. The primary role they could serve is in the preparation of aide-level personnel, who can often make or break a child care program. To expect this level worker to have a bachelor's or even associate degree preparation does not consider the realities of staffing child care services. Many people must be recuited who cannot go to college to serve as aides. One of the finest examples that emerges in this type of training is the three-year vocational program in Denmark's secondary schools to prepare mental retardation workers at the paraprofessional level (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1969). I suspect one of the factors inhibiting the development of current programs in the United States of this sort is that high school preparation has not yet emphasized the preparation of individuals for the professional care and training of children outside the home setting. To make this shift might both increase the prestige of the field as well as increase the pool of qualified aide-level workers for child care.

The last issue is the necessity for the development of programs that are external to the campus of universities, although they will probably administer and staff the programs. The need for these programs is to provide a method for the career development of staff already working in child care. This includes the aide wishing to become a teacher/professional, as well as the professional worker moving into indirect service areas such as child care administration or staff training. Most of these individuals find it difficult, if not impossible, to "return to school" when it means quitting a job. The lack of such options is even more difficult for the rural worker who very likely doesn't even have adequate programs available within reasonable traveling distances.

These external certificate, or even degree, programs might be desirable options for the preparation of administrators and staff trainers. Usually these individuals are already well established in child care in direct service, but now want to move into indirect services. Such programs might take the form of combined independent study, structured workshops and field experiences. Such a program has already been implemented in the field of developmental disabilities. In this case a grant-sponsored Institute at the University of Alabama, in conjunction with the National Association of Developmental Disabilties Managers, offers certification in management and other indirect areas.

Overall, there are many issues to be addressed in structuring an adequate system of programs and experiences for child care personnel. The most important of these, however, it to recognize that it is a system problem. Many components of the system must be coordinated, each with clearly defined missions, to prepare sufficient numbers of qualified child care workers.

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